

UNCONQUERED IRELAND.

By Arthur Griffith.

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We have no sympathy with the pessimists who at times like this speak as if Ireland had lost her spirit. Ireland has never in a century shown a more self-respecting spirit than she does now. In the nineteenth century she bent her head to every British Monarch's visit. In this century she has bent to none. However much slavishness there is left in Ireland to-day it is in manhood far ahead of the Ireland that sprawled before George IV and welcomed Victoria when she came triumphing over a land whose peasants were dying of famine.

Our eyes to-day see as national faults and defects things that in the past we regarded as harmless or even virtuous. That is why some of us forgetting to make comparison of now and then yield to the false belief that we are receding instead of advancing. Ireland is advancing. Her people have diminished in numbers but they have strengthened in character and the flabby old Ireland that danced in the Castle Yard is as dead as Queen Victoria.

In the seventh century from the building of Dublin Castle that institution cannot compel Dublin to acknowledge the right of England to rule this country. That is the central fact of the situation—the proof of the failure of the English power to conquer and testimony, when all is said that can be said by friend or foe against the Irish people, to a strength of character that no country can surpass. For no other nation on this planet has withstood conquest as Ireland has done.

Sometimes in Ireland we indulge in eulogy of ourselves that we know in our hearts to be untrue, and sometimes we run to the opposite extreme and deprecate ourselves below our deserts. The truth like all truth lies between. To deny that we are a people in whom the vices of slavery—meanness, cunning, evasion, and moral cowardice—are existent is untrue, but to assert that we are a people who have lost all

the virtues of free manhood is even more untrue. We have exhibited a tenacity of purpose and a strength of resistance to absorption that is unparalleled. Beneath the vices sprung from subjection that disfigure it to the eye there lies the character of a conquering race in the Irishman.

No Battle of Hastings, where defeated in one night, he resigns himself to subjection, is written in the page of the Irishman's history. No invader in two thousand years has made good his title to the Irish land. His Britannic Majesty's mighty fleet in Dublin Bay is a clear argument that England has power to hold this country. But it is the only argument that England has to hold it with. She is still but the armed invader and we are still the people whom she is strong enough to hold down and not strong enough to conquer. What we want most in this country is the commonsense to proportion our means to our ends, neither underestimating our enemy's great strength nor our slender resources. And next to this commonsense we want a good conceit of ourselves, for it is better to have a good conceit of ourselves than to bewail a national degeneracy that has no real existence.